Book Journeys Author Interview - Mar 27, 2014
Dr. Angela Lauria with Janette Dalgliesh, author of *Your Everyday Superpower*.

"Getting a bit of self-knowledge about your own [writing process] … and … lifting away any sense of judgment … if this is how you roll, if this is the thing that you need in order to get something finished … that's okay." ~Janette Dalgliesh

Angela:
Well, hello, everybody and welcome back to Book Journeys Radio. This is Dr. Angela Lauria, I am the creator of the Author Incubator and of the Difference Process, Ten Steps for Writing a Book That Matters. Every week on this show, we talk to an author about their experience writing their first book, the lessons that they've learned, the takeaways they have, what they might do differently next time, so that as you are working on your book, you could take some of their lessons and apply them to your project. This week on the show, I am excited, this doesn't happen as often as it probably should, but I have – one of the authors that we have published at Difference Press, Janette Dalglieh, she is the author of *Your Everyday Superpower*. She is also known as the Sweet Relief Coach, or the Brain Whisperer, and you will – learn why people call her the Brain Whisperer today, she is –she is here with us from Australia, so you might notice an accent – but we're gonna try and make sure you can understand what she has – what she has to share, 'cause she's got a lot of information that can help you with your book, so, Janette, thank you so much for being here.

Janette:
Thank you for … me, it's always fun to – fun to talk to you. (laughs)

Angela:
Aww, I love talking to you, too, and I actually – this is where I sat down and I poured a cup of tea and decided I would pretend we were doing this whole interview in Australia, over a cup of tea at your kitchen table, so –

Janette:
… I like it!

Angela:
– which would be much more fun. So, Janette, your book – your first book is called *Your Everyday Superpower*. Tell people about the book.

Janette:
It's – the – the book is an exploration of a topic that's fascinated me for s – for the last couple of years, and that's the role of the – the brain and the le – what the latest brain science can teach us about our ability to create our own reality. I've been a fan of deliberate creation, or y – w – whether we call it deliberate creation of the law of attraction or whatever, I've been a fan of it for awhile, but I always had a slight – I came from – I came from a – straight science

background. My dad was a doctor, and I studied strai – science in high school, so I – I was – I loved the listening to things like channels material, and I loved reading about the quantum physics, but deep down, there was this sense of, "I'm this – meat-based creature, I'm a biological creature that lives in a – a – a – a macroscopic, mechanistic world, where – I can't drive a cloud of energy to work, I have to get in my car, so, it's sort of puzzle. And then I came across the concept of neuroplasticity. I initially threw my own experience learning about pain and how it works in the brain and nervous system, but once I began to understand how it works, and how our brain delivers us our experience of reality, and then, I thought, change our brain, i – it really – I – I wanted to really explore that in – in depth, and – and the book was a perfect platform for doing that, so, I think that – I think much of the people who've read it have said, by the time they get to the end of the book, a – not only do they have a much clearer understanding of the mechanism by which things like the law of attraction worked, but they have an increased sense of their own – but that's why I call it a "superpower," and why, in fact, an everyday superpower, 'cause we all have it, but it's a bit like win u – 'cause we're not our brains, we're the users of our brains, so what I'm ho – what I'm – I wanna step towards is making it so that people have – the big user's manual for their brain, if you like, 'cause we – we …, we have to figure this out on our own.

Angela:
Yeah, I've noticed that! It was something I would have appreciate having had. So, okay, so you say we aren't our brains, we are the users of our brains, and then you said something about our brains created our experiences, well – 'cause that certainly sounds like a little – guru smells and bells, how - … do you mean by that?

Janette:
Well, we know that our brain delivers our experience of reality, so when I say "reality," I'm talking about absolutely everything. So, that's a blend of incoming information from within our own body, from the external world around us, and it's also our emotional landscape and – our ideas about the past, our memories, our fears or our anticipation of the future, but … - in order for us to be consciously – in order for us to become unconsciously aware of things in that moment, the – it's the brain that delivers them to us. And – and I think what really brought that home to me was understanding how pain works, in that – if you walk into the corner of ki … whack yourself on the hip, like I'm sure most of us have done at one time or another, the pain isn't localized in our hip, it feels like it's localized in our hip –

Angela:
Mmm.

Janette:
– it feels like it's localized in our hip, and … 'til the bruise turns up – yes, but – the – actually …

Angela:
I'm pretty sure it's localized in my hip.

Janette:
(laughs) It certainly feels that way, and that's the point of the illusion, the brain is giving you this story that there is pain in your hip for a very specific reason, it's an act of self-love. It's actually a way of protecting your body. So, pain exists … in order to protect the damaged region, the – from further damage, obviously – but also, it exists in order for it – to – to get our attention on it so that we'll p – we'll take some action. So, what the pain researchers now know is that – brain will deliver us the pain experience if it believes that there is risk and that there is an action to be taken.

Angela:
Mmm.

Janette:
So, that – and this helps explain a lot about things like chronic pain, for example, where it's like our body's trying to get our attention, either through a head – a stress-related headache, or through – the – the pain of an old injury that we keep on – poking around at, so – or if we're putting ourselves back in a – an unpleasant situation which is where we got injured in the first place – one of the experiments that these pain researchers did, which I think is very cool, but it's a bit mean, is – for people who had been injured at work, particularly – repetitive strain type injuries, rather than acute – the sudden ones, the accidents, …

Angela:
Mm-hm!

Janette:
– if you'd had – the buildup of – of the i – to the injury over a period of time, they asked them to imagine that they were back in that workplace, doing whatever it was they were doing when the inj – when that – they first became aware of it – the pain, and they found that people not only re-experienced the pain, that the pain didn't just come back, but in some cases the tissue itself swelled. So, it's clearly a physiological response. And one of the quotes from the – one of the pain researchers, which I really loved, is – "If somebody tells you that it's in your head, meaning that it isn't real, that just means they don't understand physiology." So, basically, everything we experience we are actually getting from our brain, it's all in our head.

Angela:
Right.

Janette:
So, I say to people, “When I say to you, this is in your head, don’t panic, it’s all in your head.” There’s nothing else, there’s no – there’s no objective reality, each one of us – your reality is different from my reality, and it – it must be, because it’s – it’s the best – it’s the brain’s best guess at what’s really going on out there.

Angela:
Wow.

Janette:
And it will flow … yeah, I know, it’s really – it – blows your mind, a little. I think the other thing that really makes it work, begins to make it really interesting, is when we look at – so the brain has all of this amazing – cacophony of incoming information, how does it decide – ‘cause it uses filters to – a – as it – if it gathers all that information we’d – we’d implode in half a second. So, how does the brain decide what information to give us and what are the filters that it uses, and it uses things like foresight. There’s really – there’s a wonderful piece of research where – i – it very clearly demonstrated that, if the – if the future was unpredictable – so, this is basic, just looking at dots in a random – i – in a – in a pattern that wasn’t random, it was – repeated, but if the – if a dot came out of place, or the things marched out of order – people’s brains had to work harder to observe it. So, they were watching it, and it’s like their brains had begun to predict what was gonna come next, and it only had to kick in and – and actually work when that pattern was broken. So, we use things like foresight. We use things like – the brain will only give us evidence for what we already believe to be true, we begi – so, you can begin to see how – what we believe to be true, and what we focus on, we’re gonna get more of that in our reality.

Angela:
Mmm.

Janette:
So, when we – and the – and the new – the good news is, because of neuroplasticity, which is the ability of the brain to change itself based on its thought. So, if I think a thought, I can change my brain, and the more conscious and self-aware I am, the more I can deliberately find new thoughts that I haven’t thought before, or new thoughts that I’m not in the habit of thinking, and as I think those new thoughts deliberately, my brain will change to match those thoughts, ‘cause it doesn’t know the difference between a real and an imagined reality, I can deliberately imagine a new reality, and my brain will begin to match it with evidence that – that shows up. And that (laughs) that of …

Angela:
Wow, so, can I – so, can I imagine a bestselling book? Can we use this to sell books?

Janette:
(laughing) Yes, absolutely! Absolutely. Why not? I – I was – thinking, if it's all a story, anyway, we can make it all up.

Angela:
So, who – who were you – who were you trying to help with your book? Why did you want to write this book?

Janette:
I think, because it goes back to what I said earlier, about not having the user's manual to your brain.

Angela:
Mmm.

Janette:
We all have access to this extraordinary superpower, and it doesn't require us – it doesn't hurt. I'm – I – I'm – I'm very inclusive, I like to embrace all of it. I like the woo-woo and I like the science. But you don't – it – it's not necessary to embrace a particular – tradition or a particular system or a particular anything if you – if – for someone to be able to access this superpower for themselves, and this book doesn't go into a lot of the how-to, because what I think – what – what I felt was really the first step, if you like, it was ba – it was basically to say to somebody who'd feels – who feels – might be powerless, or might be – wondering how does it all work and what's it all about, to sort of – I – I say to people, I sometimes wanna go to – go up to strangers in the street and shake them by the lapel and – say, "Have you heard about this stuff? Do you – do you have any idea how powerful you really are?"

Angela:
Mm.

Janette:
A – and I th – I think I wanted to – I wou – first of all, I wanted to explore it for my own benefit, just to – go, "I've got this feeling that this is how it works – what happens if I dive into the research? Will I find that it's – I – that I'm making this up?" And of course – we know what happens, my brain, which was on the hunt for good information, came up with lots of evidence what I already believed –

Angela:
Uh-huh!

Janette:
– which is that … this incredible superpower. (laughs) But there is heaps of evidence for it out there, heaps and heaps.

Angela:
And so, tell us about the writing process for you, this – it sounds like it was – an exploration. You had some ideas about what you might find, but how much was research versus writing and what was your process for writing the book?

Janette:
Great questions, and – I think the starting point, probably, has to be – and – and – this is full disclosure here – because – I was – writing this book as part of – your program – last year – it began initially it – it's first identity was a little different. It began, really, because – I have a – a process that I use with people to help them shift – a – a very ancient – occasionally we have these ancient, sticky stories, and it doesn't matter what – what we just try and do to change them, they're – they're hard to change, and I – and I – I have a process that I use with people that helps them to – 'cause there's – sometimes, there's some brain chemistry involved – I – have this – detox program that I use with people, and I – initially, I was gonna write about that.

Angela:
Mm.

Janette:
But i – it became apparent, through discussions with you, that, really, the mo – the more interesting topic was this more exploratory idea of, "How does it work? What gives it – is it true? Does it wo – is it really like this?" And I realized then, after talking to you, that the initial idea I had was – it was a – a – it was far too – a, it was narrow, but, b, it was – it required some pre-knowledge that my reader might not have. And it was actually going to be more interesting to – to – to open the door to this exploration. And so, the process itself – I had already done a lot of reading – but as a part of the writing process, it – b – it – I … – was referring back to material I had already read, but I was also researching new areas, 'cause there were – there were areas that – as you're unfolding the story of the exploration – it's a little bit like g – going across – unexplored terr – territory, there are gaps in the map.

Angela:
Mmm.

Janette:
So, … to fill in those gaps in my own knowledge, and – and then, just re-reading some of the research material I had already read. …

Angela:
Well, so, one of the things I hear a lot from people is that they don't know when to stop researching and when to write, and –

Janette:
Yeah.

Angela:
– especially with a topic like this, where there's studies – I see studies all the time on neuroscience –

Janette:
Yes.

Angela:
– and when you're writing, dear God, when you're writing your book, evidence of your book is everywhere, and the mail man all of a sudden is bringing junk mail related to your topic – you could – you barely turn around and you're – "Oh, my gosh! That's my book!" And so, how did you – how did you know when to stop and when it was time to start writing, or was there an iterative process at all?

Janette:
I think it was an iterative process, but it was – it was interesting to me, I used a piece of software called Scrivener, which is – was developed for the Mac, and it's developed specifically for writers – and one of the things I really like about Scrivener is, it's – it's a – it's – it – basically, what it does is, in a single piece of software, it gives you somewhere to store your research notes, somewhere to store your quotes for – for the – for the material as you're researching, and it also gives you somewhere to do – planning with a – corkboard type of metaphor, visual metaphor – and for each of – so – so, I was able to bounce backwards and forwards within the same piece of software –

Angela:
Mmm.

Janette:
– so, it made the process much easier, instead of having to physically – I would have my – 'cause most of my research material is available on Kindle, most of it, so I've chosen to buy it that way 'cause it's – 'cause I'm lazy. (laughs)

Angela:
Mm-hm!

Janette:
But I also …

Angela:
So, in other words, you already had it – you had electronic versions of a lot of stuff, so you weren't having to re-type over something.

Janette:
Well, what I like about having – the electronic version of something is its – m – it's – it's easier to do multiple bookmarks – so, one of the things I tend to do, while I'm reading new material is, I tend to bookmark it electronically, within the material. So that – that makes it quite easy to go back and – i – it's that thing where you – you think, "I know I've seen something about this somewhere, now where did I see that?" Having those bookmarks made it that much easier to find. But certainly …

Angela:
Yeah. I like the bookmarks, I like the ability to search, I find that, if I'm using a book a lot, in something I'm writing, I will, even if I have the paper version, which is what I normally read, I will buy the electronic version just for the ability to search something.

Janette:
Exactly. Exactly right. Yes. That's a – that's a – a – a – a huge benefit, and there were times where I – I used – I – I did use that, and it's also – it's – if a – if a rec – 'cause what I did find, quite often, was that, an author would quote a study – and I – I've got a – internal rule that I don't use a piece of information unless the author's been able to cite a study, and then I'll go and look at the original study. Now, I got to say, I'm not a scientist, and nine times out of ten, I'd be looking at the original research journal – journal article, and I would understand the introduction, the abstract –

Angela:
Mm-hm!

Janette:
– and I would probably have a reasonable – a reasonable shot at understanding the conclusions, but the methodology is – where it starts talking about the chemical makeup of proteins for neurotransmitters, and whatever –

Angela:
Uh-huh!

Janette:
– that's the area where I go, "I trust you guys to – to do the methodology correctly, I don't need to check your work!" If it got published in a – a respected peer-review – journal, then I trust that the reviewers did that. (laughs) So …

Angela:
Yup. So, what – so, what is the thing, going into writing your book, what's the thing that you wish you knew before you wrote your book?

Janette:
I – I wish I'd been clearer about my own process. I – because the framework would have been which we were doing this project – meant that I was going to be writing – I had an agreed deliverable at the end of each week, over a five-week period. That ended up stretching out because I had some unexpected family dramas with my mum, and – which – a – and – it's – tha – thank you f – and – thank God for the fact that there was flexibility built in. But what I discovered was – that I'd wish I'd known before – if I have a week in which to write something, I'm going to probably start it on day five. It doesn't matter how – how definitely I make up my mind to write it on day two and give myself plenty of time to edit, it seems that there is something in my system that doesn't let me sit down to the blank page until about day five. It's almost as though I made that pressure of a deadline to – to – to – to get the – the words to blurt out onto the page, so I will – I did all – so – so, what I tend to do, I now know, I have lots – I do have a lot of the research already there, so that I have an idea of what I'm talking about from the beginning, because that – I don't want to go in there completely not knowing what each section's gonna be about. I need to know enough to have a structure, to be able to say, "This is what I'll talk about here, this is what I'll talk about here, et cetera." But the actual writing of it – it turns out that that's ho – that's my process, that's how I do things, and it – the first time around, it really bothered me, I'd done this before, writing short stories, where – I'd – gone through agonies of feeling terribly guilty because I hadn't sat down to finish it yet, or I hadn't started it yet, and – and now that I understand that, it's much easier for me to go, "You know what? It's due on Saturday, it's now Thursday, this is when I start writing." And the writing that I do – by doing it that way, it comes – it turns out better, is all I can say. I – it – I don't know how this works or why it works, but – I – I remember once, when I … I should have known this, when I was at university – a good friend of mine had a – an essay due the next day, so we were sitting on his bed in his dormitory room – at two o'clock in the morning, and I dictated the essay as he handwrote it, this is back in the days when essays were turned in written by hand, before you had to type them out. And he – he – he took dictation, and I gave him the essay, 'cause I was an idiot and I was in love – and he got the best – he got the highest mark ever for that essay, so I'm – I clearly do my best work when it's last-minute –

Angela:
Wow.

Janette:
– which is kind of annoying, but now that I know it, I can work within it. (laughs)

Angela:
So, turn that into a tip for people that are working on a book and they're frustrated that they have started but haven't finished – maybe they started multiple books but haven't finished – how would you – how would you give them advice about how to get their book done?

Janette:
I would say – I would say two things. First of all, have someone to whom you're accountable. That makes a huge difference, and one of the things that got me over that hump of – "Oh, my God, for – it's Thursday, and I haven't done it yet" – one of the things that got me over that hump was knowing that I had made a commitment to someone else, to you, that I would deliver by a certain day, and – for me, that was a really strong motivator, so if there is a way that you can find that kind of – someone who will – someone to whom you'd feel responsible for, having said you'd do it, so – if it's your - … your bff and she doesn't really care, then it probably won't work, but is there somebody to whom you said, "Look, I – I am – I'm gonna finish this book and I'm gonna do it by such-and-such a date." Make that deal and get them to hold you accountable. It – it's sometimes externalizing that I found really helpful, and sometimes I think we – we benefit from that sense of – being required to step up. A – another thing is, I think it's really – I know that, for many, figuring out that this is my process, it meant that I could stop beating myself up for the fact that this is how I work, and so, the next time I came to write a book, the – the – knowing that this is the process, it felt much easier to sit down at the computer on a Thursday or whatever and – and not feel guilty – I wasn't having to battle the guilt and the fear that I wouldn't get it done – the "Oh, my God, I've left it so late, what if I can't do it?" I didn't have to battle those things because, by now, I'd figured out, this is actually part of how I work and it's okay. So, I think, getting a bit of self-knowledge about your own – a – a – and – and res – and lifting anyway – lifting away any sense of judgment, it's – if this is how you roll, if this is the thing that you need in order to get something finished, if you need that external motivation, that's okay! The – don't turn it into a race and to be so stressed and guilty and fearful of – of it that you – that you don't do it. And that – the other message, of course, is, i – i – be willing to have a crack at first draft.

Angela:
Mmm.

Janette:
I – I – my first drafts are not pretty. (laughs) That's another … –

Angela:
Yeah, I think that's a huge one.

Janette:
– pieces around. (laughs)

Angela:
Yeah. And – that's tricky when you're showing someone your work. I think we, a lot of times, tend to wanna keep our crappy first draft to ourselves, but understanding – how to have a … to share that, so you don't necessarily wanna share a crappy first draft with, I don't know, your mother, but if there is somebody who you can really trust to give you the kind of feedback that's gonna keep you moving forward, sometimes people say the littlest things, and they can slow down your progress for days or weeks or sometimes completely, because it just sets off your little lizard that makes it harder to write –

Janette:
Absolutely. A – yes.

Angela:
– so, you have to be careful about who you share it with, but you have to be careful about not sharing it at all.

Janette:
A – I can relate a story that was a really good example of that. I – some – a couple of years ago, I was invited to submit a short story to an anthology, with an editor I'd never met, and – didn't know at all, and when I sent my manuscript through – my first draft through, it wasn't perfect, but i – I admit there were things that needed – a – a – addressing. And – her response – in – in a … response, the fact that her covering e-mail that she sent back, she said that she thought my character – I – you know how sometimes negative words get burned into your memory? …

Angela:
Mm-hm!

Janette:
She said that she thought that the actions my character took – were psychotic, and – (laughs) and I was – "What? This is my – this is my narrator character that we have to have empathy for her, and you hate her that much?" And I read all of her comments throughout, and she clearly hadn't – she clearly hadn't understood the story, which meant I hadn't written it well enough for her to understand.

Angela:
Mmm.

Janette:
I'm not blaming her, but the way she chose to express – the fact that she'd expressed it like that might put up my guard, and thank God I had another editor friend who'd – who'd edited my stories for another publication – and I – I – I actually rang her in tears and said, "I – I have no idea what to do next. I am so angry and I am so hurt, and I feel like pulling my story from this anthology, and I don't want to do that, 'cause I think it's a good story, and I think it's a good a – I – anthology," and – bless her heart, she – she said, "E-mail it through to me, with all the comments and I'll read it through," and she basically took me back into sanity again and gave me some really good ideas, and she was – she said, "You haven't made it clear, you haven't explained it well, but I see what you're getting at, because I know how you write, and I know your – how you think. So – I think it would be good if you did …." So, between the two of us – I ended up taking it … again – f – in terms of the story. But she was able to – so, having that safe space with her, which … able to say, "No, this is – this story has value, it just hasn't been particularly well-told yet" –

Angela:
Right.

Janette:
– was really helpful. Yeah. So, that sounds … Yeah.

Angela:
Right. Everybody needs someone in their – in their writing circle who can help them do that in their world. So, why is it worth it? Why was all the – time and effort and the blood, sweat and tears, what has come out of being an author that makes it worth it to you?

Janette:
Well, that's such a good question. First of all, the fact that I now feel totally comfortable calling myself an author, and I can't explain why that's been a desire for all – many, many years, except to say – when I was a – there – when I was a kid, I can remember – if my – if I'd been sent to my room in trouble for something that I thought was deeply unfair, I had a – an ambition to write a book from – basically explaining parenting to the parents. (laughs) …

Angela:
So, what was …

Janette:
I never did it, so – and I've forgotten now what it – what the child's perspective, so I was – "Oh! Missed that opportunity." But – I think it's twofold. It's just well – it's just being able to say, "I did it. I'm an author." But it's also being able to look at the reaction of people who have reviewed the book and – and feel really satisfied. One – there's one person who reviewed it on Amazon, i – it's somebody I don't know, who – and bless them for putting this

review there, because it just – I woke up to it, and I read it, and it brought tears to my eyes, I was so grateful. Basically, she said that, after reading this, she bee – she's had – deal – dealt – been dealing with chronic pain for many years, and after reading my book, as a result of reading my book, she said that, "As a result of reading this book," she sought out a – pain psychologist who specializes in helping people shift – retrain their brain to – lessen pain, and – and that the work has already made a difference to her life.

Angela:
Wow.

Janette:
And I was – "Yeah!" Given that this is not a how-to book, this is a exploration, the fact that somebody got something – such a concrete benefit from reading this book –

Angela:
Wow.

Janette:
– it just woke me up. It's one thing to have people say, "Oh, I really understand my own brain, … better, and I feel like I have power," that's fabulous. But this is – another level of satisfaction, so –

Angela:
Absolutely.

Janette:
I – and it reminded me of that thing of, for anybody who's got a book in them, you cannot know what impact that's gonna have on other people, on the world, and to bring it out, so you have to bring it out. You have a responsibility to the planet.

Angela:
Yeah. "You cannot make a difference if your manuscript is sitting on your hard drive," that is a sentence I say often.

Janette:
Yeah.

Angela:
Janette Dalgleish is the author of – of *Your Everyday Superpower*, *Your Everyday Superpower*. You can go to youreverydaysuperpower.com or sweetreliefcoaching.com to learn more, Janette, thank you so much for being with us today, it was great to talk to you.

Janette:
Thank you so much.

Angela:
And we will be back next week on Book Journeys Radio, where we are changing the world one book at a time.